

Mark 15:33-47

“Open Access”

By the time you come to Vs 33 of Mark Ch 15 Jesus has already be tried...and crucified. We're notified of what exactly took place in a single sentence found in Vs 25, “Now it was the 3rd hour, and they crucified Him.” Crucifixion; the Romans didn't invent it, however they certainly *perfected* it as a form of capital punishment that was devised to bring about a slow torturous death.

Dr. Mark Eastman comments, “The nails, which were generally about 7-9 inches long, were placed between the bones of the forearm (the radius and ulna) and the small bones of the hands (the carpal bones). The placement of the nail at this point had several effects. First it ensured that the victim would indeed hang there until dead. Secondly, a nail placed at this point would sever the largest nerve in the hand called the median nerve. The severing of this nerve is a medical catastrophe. In addition to severe burning pain the destruction of this nerve causes permanent paralysis of the hand. Furthermore, by nailing the victim at this point in the wrist, there would be minimal bleeding and there would be no bones broken! (Which of course is consistent with prophecy)

The positioning of the feet is probably the most critical part of the mechanics of crucifixion. First the knees were flexed about 45 degrees and the feet were flexed (bent downward) an additional 45 degrees until they were parallel the vertical pole. An iron nail about 7-9 inches long was driven through the feet between the 2nd and 3rd metatarsal bones. In this position the nail would sever the dorsal pedal artery of the foot, but the resultant bleeding would be insufficient to cause death.

The resulting position on the cross sets up a horrific sequence of events which results in a slow, painful death. Having been pinned to the cross, the victim now has an impossible position to maintain. With the knees flexed at about 45 degrees, the victim must bear his weight with the muscles of the thigh. However, this is an almost impossible task-try to stand with your knees flexed at 45 degrees for 5 minutes. As the strength of the legs gives out, the weight of the body must now be borne by the arms and shoulders. The result is that within a few minutes of being placed on the cross, the shoulders will become dislocated. Minutes later the elbows and wrists become dislocated. The result of these dislocations is that the arms are as much as 6-9 inches longer than normal. With the arms dislocated, considerable body weight is transferred to the chest, causing the rib cage to be elevated in a state of perpetual inhalation. Consequently, in order to exhale the victim must push down on his feet to allow the rib muscles to relax. The problem is that the victim cannot push very long because the legs are extremely fatigued. As time goes on, the victim is less and less able to bear weight on the legs, causing further dislocation of the arms and further raising of the chest wall, making breathing more and more difficult.

The result of this process is a series of catastrophic physiological effects. Because the victim cannot maintain adequate ventilation of the lungs, the blood oxygen level begins to diminish and the blood carbon dioxide (CO₂) level begins to rise. This rising CO₂ level

stimulates the heart to beat faster in order to increase the delivery of oxygen and the removal of CO₂. However, due to the pinning of the victim and the limitations of oxygen delivery, the victim cannot deliver more oxygen and the rising heart rate only increases oxygen demand. So this process sets up a vicious cycle of increasing oxygen demand-which cannot be met-followed by an ever increasing heart rate. After several hours the heart begins to fail, the lungs collapse and fill up with fluid, which further decreases oxygen delivery to the tissues. The blood loss and hyperventilation combines to cause severe dehydration. That's why Jesus said, "I thirst." Over a period of several hours the combination of collapsing lungs, a failing heart, dehydration, and the inability to get adequate oxygen supplies to the tissues cause the eventual death of the victim."

To add insult to injury as Jesus would struggle to obtain each breath, pulling against the nails in His wrists, despite His bones being out of joint (which you can read of in Ps 22), scraping His raw and bleeding back against the upright that His feet were fastened to, the people down below Him were wagging their heads and hurling insults *at* Him... Many of us feel as though we could endure almost anything as long as we had someone there with us who would simply stand beside us. Jesus would suffer completely alone.

You might think that people would be satisfied seeing Him on the cross, an unrecognizable mess, suffering unspeakably...they weren't, they wagged their heads, shot insults at Him, jeered and taunted Him. Look at Vs 32.

Vs32

What's that? "Jesus, if we could see this work *from* You then we would be compelled to put our faith *in* You." They're tempting Him, taunting Him, provoking Him, asking for a *sign* from Him. "Seeing is believing," Thomas took that position remember? Now I'm not saying that Thomas was in the same category these guys were but what I am saying is that they were just like so many people even today. Saying that if they seen something that they believed to be worthy enough to prove to them that God existed that *then* they'd believe, the problem is what's worthy of God in their mind? What could God do that wouldn't leave you skeptical and wanting confirmation that He really did it? Do this...ok do it again...it's never enough.

Listen, here's the deal. I know this will be hard for you to absorb (being from the "show me" state and all), really it's difficult for mankind in general to absorb but seeing *is not* believing. The Miraculous does not produce faith in the human heart. It's not the "wow factor" on display *for* us that will somehow produce faith *in* us; it's the word of God.

Think about it; how many miracles do you suppose Jesus worked/performed throughout His ministry? We don't really know. What we *do* know is that they weren't in short supply, we know that He fed thousands of people from a handful of loaves and a few fish on more than one occasion. We know that He opened the eyes of the blind, made lepers whole, caused the lame to leap, He walked on water, He brought up so many fish from the deep for the nets of His disciples that the nets were breaking on more than one occasion. We find over and over again throughout the gospel records where multitudes of sick and/or afflicted were brought to Him and He healed them all. There were at least 3 people that He raised from the dead, as a matter of fact John tells us in his gospel, "*And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*" John 21:25 Jesus was about His Father's business on every level while He walked the earth, both in word and in *works*. However if You come off that cross *then* we'll believe...no you won't! Why? Because miracles don't make for faith, what they will do is stir

the insatiable appetite for more. Once you've seen 1 miracle you want to see another, prove it again, how can I know that was legit? The skeptic will remain skeptical.

We've considered the children of Israel in their wilderness wanderings. They seen the radical plagues in Egypt, the Red Sea parting, the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. They had manna miraculously provided for them morning by morning, drank water from the rock and yet for all of that what reason does the bible gives us for the fact that they didn't enter the Promised Land initially? *Unbelief...what!?* What's it going to take? Not the "wow factor," it's the word. Rom 10:17, "*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" Faith doesn't come by seeing, but by hearing, they didn't lack for evidence they were inebriated with unbelief.

Remember Luke 16? The man in hell begging Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead, back from Paradise to warn his brothers; Ab said they had Moses and the prophets to testify to them. "*And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'*" Luke 16:30-31 Translation: If the word of God will not convince them nothing will, not even a man rising from the dead. Seeing is not tantamount to believing. Jesus gave them a far greater sign than coming down off that cross, it's called the resurrection, yet still they refused to believe. Evidence was available; they simply refused to see it.

Vs33-34

As we've mentioned before as horrible as things were for Jesus physically we shouldn't be distracted from the fact that those things were at a distant 2nd compared to the anguish that Jesus was dealing with spiritually.

We read here that it was the 6th hour, or the noon day, when the sun should've been shining the brightest a "supernatural sackcloth" (if you will) blanketed Jerusalem. Did it cover the earth? I don't know, that wouldn't surprise me though we're not told. It's interesting that at His birth, light shone forth out of the darkness, but at His death darkness covered the noonday sun. Was it a solar eclipse? No, because it was during the time of Passover which was the full moon, the moon wasn't in the right place to create an eclipse, this was a supernatural happening.

Pointing no doubt to several things, it pointed to judgment, it pointed to the blackness and the blindness of men's hearts, it was no doubt eerily reminiscent of the 1st Passover. You recall that just before the judgment of God fell whereby the 1st born would die in every house which was not found under the blood of the lamb there was darkness that covered the land of Egypt for 3 days, a darkness that could be felt. Here as the 1st born, the only begotten Son of God is preparing to die by the judgment of God, the Passover Lamb of God is being slain for the sin of the world darkness descends upon the land for 3 hours, and the Son of God remains silent upon the cross as wave after unrelenting wave of sin is poured out over His sinless soul.

One commentator writes, "Again and again during those 3 hours His soul recoiled and convulsed as all the lies of civilization, the murders of a thousand 'Killing Fields,' the whorings of the world's armies, and the noxious brew of hatreds, jealousies, and pride were poured out on His purity." (Kent Hughes, Mark Volume 2 pg 207) Isaiah states it this way, "*All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the*

iniquity of us all.” Isa 53:6 Peter writes, “...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed.” 1 Peter 2:24 The black silence continued on for 1 hour, for 2 hours, wave upon wave was crashing over His sinless soul, and under that shroud of darkness the mystery of the cross is taking place. Jesus is being made sin for us. As the scriptures says, *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor 5:21*

The terror of Christ has come upon Him, this was the dread of the garden the night before. Jesus didn't shrink back from being brutalized at the hands of man, it wasn't being crucified that caused the agonizing blow to His soul. It was this thought right here that He would actually be abandoned by His Father somehow and in some way. Throughout eternity He'd never known separation from the Father, yet that fellowship would be severed in this moment. So that at the end of the 3rd hour the silence would be shattered as Jesus cried out from the Cross, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Now we shouldn't get the idea that God had forsaken Him in the sense that God was no longer there. God is Omni present, nor should we get the idea that Jesus emptied Himself of deity here. As a matter of fact the bible tells us that, *“...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,” 2 Cor 5:19* So it's not that Jesus wasn't God here, or that God was no longer present however that intimate fellowship had been severed. Jesus here wasn't at this point the object of affection so much as He was the target of God's wrath, and I don't pretend to understand the dynamics of what all is taking place here, there are things transpiring at this point in the text that we'll probably never fully comprehend. However we thank God *for* it because apart *from* it we could never be saved.

God has so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son for us so that if we would just believe in Him, trust fully in Him, place our confidence for salvation upon Him that we would never perish but have everlasting life. It's in *that* context that Isaiah tells us that it pleased the Lord to bruise Him as He made His soul an offering for sin. (How can we not praise the Lord?) Jesus was God forsaken that we might never be forsaken by God, He was willing to take upon Himself the wrath that we deserve that we might receive the reward that He deserves.

Vs35-37

The other gospel records fill in a few details for us; the reason someone went and offered Jesus a drink from a sponge was because He'd uttered the words, “I thirst.” So one of the soldiers lifted a sponge to Him on the end of a reed and pressed it to His mouth. It wasn't the sour wine that was mingled with myrrh that He was offered earlier, there was no anesthetic properties to it so He received it. But upon hearing Him cry, “Eloi, Eloi” someone said, “Hey, He's calling for Elijah, let's see if he'll come and rescue Him!” Whether or not they misunderstood His words is unclear, what does seem to be clear is that they were mocking Him either way.

But Jesus was often the victim of misunderstanding, both in life and in death. People misunderstood His motives, they misunderstood His words, and they misunderstood His works. and Because of the fact that you serve the Lord you can anticipate much the same. People will at times misunderstand your motives, they'll misunderstand your words, and they'll misunderstand your works, no student is above his Master. If the sinless Son of God would be misunderstood, mocked, made fun of and persecuted, how much more can we anticipate the

same. Don't be surprised when you are misunderstood in your service to the Lord, your service to others in the *name* of the Lord. Just do like Jesus, "Father forgive them," and you keep looking *to* Him and pouring your life out *before* Him.

There in Vs 37 Mark tells us that Jesus cried out with a loud voice and breathed His last. John tells us what He cried out. He cried out a single Greek word, "Tetélestai" which translates into English, "It is Finished!" "Paid in full" "The goal has been reached" "Mission accomplished." What was paid in full? The purchase penalty for our sin. What was finished? The work of redemption on our behalf. Now only 1 thing would remain...the resurrection. The shedding of His blood, the laying down of His life was payment in full, the resurrection would serve as the receipt (so to speak), the proof of purchase. The proof that the payment Christ had made was both appropriate and acceptable would be found in the fact of the resurrection.

You guys this is the good news, the work was done. That means that there's *nothing*, listen, *nothing* that I can *do* that can make for my salvation because the work is already *done* in Christ. Even if I wanted to I couldn't because the payment demanded perfection and that alone disqualifies everyone of us because the fact of the matter is, is that we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God therefore it's impossible that I should redeem myself.

Now this is something that we all nod our heads to in agreement with yet it's very difficult for some groups to accept because they want to attach things like *baptism* as a necessary prerequisite to salvation. I've grown up around here I know the teaching of baptismal regeneration is prevalent around here however it's inaccurate exegesis. Being baptized will not/cannot save you. It is an outward demonstration of the inward transformation of your heart, it's an act of obedience demonstrating your identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ People think that if they're good ol' boys, and go to church on Sunday they'll be saved, that philosophy centers around the works of man not the grace of God.

It says if I get enough gold stars on my attendance chart I'm in, it's legalism. We're not saved by what *we do* but by what *He's done* on our behalf. We're either saved (Eph 2) *by* grace *through* faith (period) or we're not. If we add to the cross, baptism, church attendance, whatever then what we're saying is that what Jesus did really *wasn't finished* I seal the deal through baptism or whatever the case may be. It sends the signal (inadvertently though it may be) that the work of the cross was insufficient for me and that my friends is dangerous ground to tread. I know it's difficult for a lot of folks around here to palate but you should search the scriptures and make sure that what you believe is in fact scriptural.

Jesus said, "It is finished!" He didn't tell that thief that He'd have loved to have taken him to paradise but unfortunately he was never baptized so he's out. People say, "Well he was under the O.C." not true. J.B. was technically the last prophet under the O.C. Jesus had already declared the N.C. before He went to the cross. However even if He hadn't it wouldn't change anything because as the book of Romans articulates righteousness has never been imputed to man on the basis of their works (our works are as filthy rags before the Lord) righteousness has always been accredited to man by God, through faith. We're saved by grace, through faith based upon the finished work of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

Now don't misunderstand me; I've baptized I don't even know how many people. I believe we should do it, however we shouldn't attach strings to it as though it's essential to salvation. Because that (my friends) takes away from the work of the cross...be careful.

Following the cry of victory we learn in Luke's gospel that Jesus said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit" and with that He died. No one took His life, He laid it down, when the work was finished, when the righteous requirements of the Father were satisfied Jesus released His Spirit and He died.

Vs38

You might want to underline that Vs because it's pivotal, it's a critical element; why? Think it through, what was the point in that veil in the temple? Separation; it separated the holy place, from the holy of holies, it was that place that signified the very presence of God. It sent the message to man that there is something separating Me and you and you do well to keep your distance from Me. Because should you cross this line, come behind this veil you will surely die. Sinful man in the presence of a Holy God means one thing, death for the sinful man. As a matter of fact it was such a sacred place that only one man could enter that area, the High Priest and at that only 1 day a year, the great Day of Atonement. Even at that should he enter the holy of holies with unconfessed sin in his life he would be struck dead instantly.

So you're beginning to see the enormity of the significance of this moment. Because when Jesus died that veil was torn (notice) not from the bottom to the top as though *man* grabbed hold of it, but from the top to the bottom as though *God* grabbed hold of it and tore it in half creating *open access* to all who would come *to Him through Christ*. God invites *not* the high priest, but *whosoever* will may come into His presence *not* just one day a year, but access is granted 24/7 through the person of Jesus Christ He is the door that grants us open access into the very presence of God. As the author of Hebrews said, "*Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,*" Heb 10:19-20 Jesus opened the way for you and me, He is the way the truth and the life and the only way *to* the Father is *through* Him.

Unfortunately people often times try to sew the veil back up through legalism, rules and regulations.

"Before I can come to God I've got to pray so much, read so many Ch's, give so much or be at church each Sunday." We slide subtly back into what we do Vs what He's done, the prerequisite for fellowship with God is not our works, but faith in Him and His *finished work*.

Vs39

Was this confession unto salvation? I'm not sure we should take it that far however he was evidently aware of the supernatural activity surrounding the event and perhaps he was saved shortly thereafter. This man had seen untold amounts of crucifixions but there was something distinctly different surrounding the crucifixion of Christ. Here's what we need to see, the 1st person impacted in a positive way by death of Christ upon the cross was a Gentile. In this time of darkness he's seeing the light.

Listen, so many times we wonder why we're faced with adversity, or tragedy when Christ died for us, and loves us so much. Here's why; there are centurions watching. They're not impressed by the way you sail through life in prosperity, it's the adversity, the days of difficulty, when dark days are upon you and they see the light of Christ shining *through* you...*that's* when they're moved, that's when they note something different *about* you and Jesus is made profoundly real to them.

Vs40-41

Kinda makes you wonder where the men were doesn't it? It's true that God has called men to stand up be spiritual leaders, both in the church and in their home. Be that as it may as a general rule gals are generally more in tune *with* the Lord and available to *serve* the Lord than are men. There are generally more women in church than men, women are generally more willing to stand up and fill gaps of service than are men...I praise God for godly women that are committed to Christ regardless of the cost. I praise God for godly men who are as well, but as a general rule the gals outnumber the guys significantly.

Vs42-45

We're glad that Pilate investigated the matter closely because all kinds of skeptics have arisen doubting the death of Christ. Suffice it to say for now, Jesus was dead. The reason Pilate Marveled is because death on a cross could take a couple of days, Jesus died in 6 hrs. When God's wrath was satisfied He dismissed His Spirit.

But we read here that Joseph of Arimathea (who was a prominent council member) *taking courage* went into Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. What was so courageous about it? A # of things, for 1 Jesus had just been crucified for treason, now if you want His body you're saying that you sympathize with him which puts you on thin ice in Rome's eyes. We also know from this that he was a member of the Sanhedrin, the committee that just condemned Jesus to death (though we know from Luke's gospel he didn't consent to their actions). This would be social/political suicide for him. He would be ceremonially unclean unable to partake of Passover; his request amounted to open confession of personal loyalty to the crucified Christ. He was a "closet Christian" no more. There are no such things as "secret servants" of Jesus, the time will come, you will be brought to light. and Joseph decided that it didn't matter what it cost him personally, politically, or otherwise; he would be ashamed of Jesus no more.

Have you counted the cost of being identified with Christ crucified? It'll cost you make no mistake, be it socially, politically, financially, somehow, in some way it will cost you to come out of the closet and be open about your allegiance to Christ. But be encouraged because God won't be a debtor to the likes of you or me. He is more than able to make up for any loss you may incur for His name's sake.

Believe me eternity will bear that out, your light affliction will never compare to the eternal weight of glory that it's working for you.

Vs 46-47

Ch 15 ends on sort of a down stroke, (a somber scene) the stone rolled over the entry to the tomb, the gals reflecting on the reality of what just happened, and that Jesus was with them no more...The whole gamut of emotions are swirling in them, overwhelming them and we leave them devastated. They, "observed where He was laid."

But soon they would see with their own eyes the fulfillment of His words, "Destroy this temple and in 3 days I will raise it up." Resurrection Sunday is on its way!

Christ created open access through the rending of His flesh, the spilling of His blood into the very presence of God for you and me. By grace we have been saved through faith, and that not of ourselves it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast. We thank God for the triumphant cry of Christ, "It is finished!"

Prayer Points:

Lord we thank You that You left no part of salvation up to us. From the Alpha to the Omega You've done it all, and we give You praise. Lord embolden us, that we be not ashamed to identify with You, or stand publicly *for* You regardless of what it might cost us. It cost You all, You hung in open shame for our sake, help us to be willing to suffer reproach for Your sake. Have Your way *in* us and be glorified *through* us. We don't need to be "wowed" we're thankful for Your word, increase our faith...

Christ has created access to God the Father for each and every one of us. You don't have to *do* anything to gain His acceptance, you've simply got to trust in what He's *done* for you. The chastisement for our peace was placed upon Him and it's by His stripes that we are healed. You can come to God freely through Christ, you don't have to get *this* worked out, or *that* taken care of, whosoever would *believe* upon Him will never perish but have everlasting life. If you're willing to *trust in the Lord with all Your heart*, to repent of Your sin and receive His forgiveness He'll do the work of salvation/regeneration/new life for you right here, right now. Are you open to that? If so why not let Him know?